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ABSTRACT

In this presentation a faculty member at Salem College, shares problems and advantages in the teacher induction program in North Carolina. Revised standards and guidelines for the preparation of educational personnel were adopted by the state in 1983 to establish quality assurance for teachers and administrators in North Carolina. New policies were developed for admission to and exit from teacher education progams, laboratory field experiences, teacher competencies in certification areas and in general and professional education, and collaboration between local education agencies and institutions of higher education during preservice teacher education and the first two years of teaching. Under the Initial Certification Program two-year initial teaching certificates are issued to beginning teachers in North Carolina. The program makes use of a support team comprised of a career status teacher, the school principal, and a third member knowledgeable in curriculum and instruction. Recommendations for improving this program conclude the document. (CB)

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COLLABORATION: THE KEY TO TEACHER INDUCTION PROGRAMS

Dorothy Russell

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Presentation AACTE February 27,1986
Collaboration:The Key to Teacher Induction Programs
Dr. Dorothy Russell
Salem College

The purpose of this program today is to share with you North Carolina's statewide policy on teacher induction as well as my own involvement as a faculty member in higher education with the implementation of the plan.

In 1978 the state of North Carolina initiated a plan to establish "Quality Assurance" in the preparation of teachers and administrators for North Carolina's schools. The study involved hundreds of people across the state drawn from the ranks of teachers, administrators, teacher educators, and special interest groups. As a result revised standards and guidelines for the preparation of educational personnel were adopted in 1983.

To give you an example of the far reaching changes made as a result of this study, new policies were developed for:

1. Admission to and exit from teacher education programs (national standardized tests are now required for both admission and exit).

2. Laboratory field experiences.

3. Additionally, competencies for each certification area as well as general and professional education were spelled out in great detail.

4. and most importantly to our discussion today, collaboration between local education agencies and institutions of higher education during the pre-service (student teaching) stage and the first two years of teaching were mandated.

As a teacher educator, I would venture to say that the most far reaching change and the one that has the most potential to impact the profession positively was the reconceptualization of teacher education as a six year process--four years of higher education capped by a two year induction phase.

By induction I mean the transitional phase between student teaching and becoming an experienced teacher--usually the first year or two of teaching--a time when the novice needs considerable assistance and support to become the fully functioning professional we all desire.

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Beginning in January 1985, students completing teacher education programs in North Carolina were given initial certificates which were good for the first two years of teaching. The initial certificate will be turned into a continuing certificate after successful completion of the Initial Certification Program(ICP). The Initial Certification Program is a program of professional assistance and support for beginning teachers which includes both formative and summmative assessment of key behaviors associated with teaching effectiveness.

With this as background I would like to now spend some time briefly describing the Initial Certification Program. The goals of the program are twofold, first to offer beginning teachers the assistance and support they need to reach a satisfactory level of performance, and second to assure that each teacher given continuing certification in the state of North Carolina has demonstrated the competencies necessary for effective teaching.

My own involvement with the Initial Certification Program grows out of my belief that this may be one way that we can counter the widespread disaffection or "curve of disenchantment" with both students and teaching that so often results by the end of that first year or two of teaching. Hopefully, too we can save many of the teaching skills learned through teacher education programs which are dropped during the first year of teaching in favor of more inflexible and authoritarian behavior that I will label "survival skills".

Just what is this Initial Certification Program that appears to hold such promise? The key component is the mentor or support team. Each beginning teacher is assigned either a mentor or a support team composed of a career status teacher, the principal, and a third party knowledgeable in curriculum and instruction. This third person could be a reading supervisor based in the school, a central office supervisor or a teacher educator.
Whenever possible the mentor or career status teacher should be based in the same school and teaching the same grade level and/or subject area as the beginning teacher.
If the system choses to have a mentor instead of a support teacher for the beginning teacher, the principal will automatically share in the responsibility for providing support.

Support team personnel are chosen by the superintendent or his/her designee in cooperation with the principal. Each system is charged by the state with developing a policy for selection of the mentor or support team.

According to state policy, the mentors /support teams must be trained in the following--orientation and definition

of roles, observation skills, conferencing skills, adult development theories, effective teaching practices, and development of Professional Development Plans. The actual training should be designed and delivered as a collaborative effort between the State Department of Public Instruction (SDPI), Institutions of Higher Education (IHE'S), and Local Educaation Agencies (LEA'S).

Responsibilities of the mentor/support teams include conducting a minimum of three observations per year using the Teacher Performance Appraisal Instrument as the basis for the observation. The first two observations are formative. On the basis of the first observation, a Professional Improvement Plan is developed. The Professional Improvemnt Plan includes the beginning teacher's strengths and areas needing improvement as well as suggestions as to how the desired improvements will be reached. For example, the plan will include the means of technical assistance offered to the beginning teacher such as observations of other teachers, films, readings, and workshops. The final evaluation each year is summative and these ratings form the basis for the decision as to whether the school system recommends the beginning teacher for continuing certification.

The title of my presentation is collaboration so it is only fair to spend some time on this topic. Just what has been the nature of the collaborative efforts between IHE"s and LEA's in the implementation of the Initial Certification Program. First let me tell you what the state policy says. According to the state policy there should be collaboration between IHE's and LEA's in the development of each system's plan and continuous involvement in the plan. The state guideline says that there must be assurance that each "program plan was developed in collaboration with institution(s) of higher education having approved teacher education programs and describes their continuous involvement with the program."

There are three IHE's in Winston-Salem,-- Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem State University and Salem College. Representatives from all three colleges/universities were involved in the formative stages of the development of the training program for persons who would serve on support teams. However, we were not involved in the deliberations of the local LEA as they decided whether to use mentors or support teams, how they would select the support teams and how they would evaluate the process.

My involvement has been the most extensive of anyone in the area. That has been because I have taken a personal interest in the success of the program. As I indicated

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earlier I sincerely believe this program has the potential to improve the teaching profession.

I was involved very early in the planning process as to how we would train the various persons serving on support teams. If you will remember according to the guidelines support teams are to be trained in observation skills, conferencing skills, theories of supervision, theories of adult development, effective teaching practices, and development of professional development plans.

What the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County System decided to do--which I believe is unique--was to select a group of teachers and administrators and train them to become the future trainers. And that is where my involvement has been predominantly. I have worked with several other IHE representatives to train the future trainers. However, I have also presented a workshop on clinical supervision to all of this year's participants.

I have also volunteered to serve on one of the support teams. I believe in the early planning process the state hoped to involve teacher educators more directly --to serve on the actual teams but this would be a logistical nightmare given the large number of beginning teachers each year across the state and the relatively small number of IHE teacher trainers available. So it is only an occasional team that actually has IHE representation.

In anticipation of this presentation I decided to interview some beginning teachers to see what their impression of the program was and how things were going. I'd like to spend my remaining time with you sharing what I found.

Admittedly, the number of beginning teachers I interviewed was small--nine, but there was such obvious consensus on several items that I feel they are worthy of mention. One additional caveat--this is the first year and there was little if any lead time so I would anticipate that some of the problems experienced this year would not be there next year.

1. Because of the newness of the program support teachers were not assigned until late September or even after. The need for the support teacher is greatest in the very beginning. Some mechanism needs to be developed to bring beginning teachers and support teachers together before the school year begins.

2. While I agree with the finding in this month's Journal of Teacher Education that the support teacher should be on the same grade level or teaching in the same discipline, it is also imperative that the support teacher be in the same

school and in as close proximity as possible to the beginning teacher. Where support teachers were in other schools their assistance was almost non-existent. In fact, beginning teachers in this situation found teachers in their own buildings to play the role of support teacher on an informal basis. I strongly suggest that when a teacher in the same subject area is not available such as in Latin or Business Education that the teacher be assigned a support teacher in the same building in a related area. For example in the case of a Latin teacher, a foreign language teacher would be helpful. Many of the problems experienced and needs expressed are generic and could be ameliorated by a support teacher in the same building. In those rare instances where the problem is so discipline related, the supervisor or another teacher from another building could be called in.

3. The principal plays a crucial role in this program in terms of making available time during the day when the beginning teacher and the support teacher can get together to plan and exchange ideas. The support teacher needs to be freed up from other building responsibilities to have time to work with the beginning teacher. Preferably, both should have lightened loads.

4. Beginning teachers clearly articulated a need for informal evaluation and feedback which they are not receiving. The teams are performing the assessment function rather well--i.e. they are observing, filling out forms, etc.--but they are not carrying through on the clinical supervision. This probably should not have come as a surprise because in the training of the support teams two and one half days were spent on assessment and using the state instrument and one day was spent on clinical supervision and conferencing skills. Support teachers need to be convinced that the beginning teacher does want and need this kind of feedback. One teacher I interviewed saw the greatest advantage of the program as the opportunity to get some feedback on what he was doing right. Clearly, the need exists for feedback.

5. Teachers entering from out of state with experience need a differentiated program of observation and support. They are currently being treated as beginning teachers and they resent this. While they did articulate the same need for information regarding school policies and procedures as the beginning teachers, this needs to be supplied in a different format.

6. When the interviews began I noticed some hesitation and resentment --I was afterall using their planning time for something that did not appear meaningful to them. However, as the interviews progressed the beginning teachers warmed up and began sharing their views and problems quite openly.

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I eventually was the one to call a halt to the interviews. This supports the recommendation in the literature that beginning teachers would profit by being brought together occasionally to share progress and to receive assistance for common problems. I would recommend some kind of monthly seminar for beginning teachers where concerns could be shared and assistance with specific problems given.

7. For those beginning teachers who were not receiving the support the program promised, the program was perceived as simply one more bureauocratic problem to deal with and the observations clearly heightened their anxiety. For example, several said I have so much to worry about my first year of teaching and then this too.

Clearly, there are problems with the program both in conceptualization and implementation. I don't think we anticipated the resentment of teachers coming from out of state. Also, we thought that it was more important to have someone in you teaching area than someone in your building as a support teacher. We have not been able to convince the support teachers that the beginning teachers would welcome them in their classrooms for informal observation and feedback. These problems can be solved and I am hopeful that as we continue our collaborative efforts we can solve them.

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